

As the most scientifically advanced country in the world, we should be jumping at the chance to conduct a comprehensive national study and ensure absolute trust in our Nation's vaccine program. Parents deserve answers, and children deserve no less than absolute certainty and safety, which is why I am pleased to reintroduce this legislation today.

# RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUNETEENTH INDEPENDENCE DAY

SPEECH OF

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, June 18, 2007*

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 155, which recognizes the historical significance of Juneteenth Independence Day, and expresses the sense of Congress that history should be regarded as a means for understanding the past and more effectively facing the challenges of the future.

June 19th also known as Juneteenth, is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond, yet it is still not a nationally recognized holiday.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official Texas state holiday through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African American state legislator. The successful passage of this bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. Representative Edwards has since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all across America.

Today, Juneteenth commemorates African-American freedom. This special day emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement and for planning the future. Its growing popularity signifies a level of maturity and dignity in America long overdue. In cities across the country, people of all races, nationalities and religions are joining hands to truthfully acknowledge a period in our history that shaped and continues to influence our society today. Sensitized to the conditions and experiences of others, only then can we make significant and lasting improvements in our society.

The Civil Rights movement of the 50's and 60's yielded both positive and negative results for the Juneteenth celebrations. While it pulled many of the African American youth away and into the struggle for racial equality, many linked these struggles to the historical struggles of their ancestors. This was evidenced by student demonstrators involved in the Atlanta civil rights campaign in the early 1960's, who wore Juneteenth freedom buttons.

Again in 1968, Juneteenth received another strong resurgence through the Poor People's March to Washington, DC, Rev. Ralph Abernathy's call for people of all races, creeds, economic levels and professions to

come to Washington to show support for the poor. Many of these attendees returned home and initiated Juneteenth celebrations in areas previously absent of such activity. In fact, two of the largest Juneteenth celebrations founded after this march are now held in Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

Throughout the 80's and 90's Juneteenth has continued to enjoy a growing and healthy interest from communities and organizations throughout the country. Institutions such as the Smithsonian, the Henry Ford Museum and others have begun sponsoring Juneteenth-centered activities. In recent years, a number of National Juneteenth Organizations have risen to take their place alongside older organizations—all with the mission to promote and cultivate knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

Juneteenth today celebrates African American freedom while encouraging self-development and respect for all cultures. As it takes on a more national and even global perspective, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten. The future of Juneteenth looks bright as the number of cities and states come on board and form local committees and organizations to coordinate the activities.

Now in 2007, I push forward with the hope that my colleagues will remember with compassion the African American citizens who helped build this country, but were still held in illegal bondage due to the hatred, bigotry and cruelty of others. I ask that my colleagues help support this resolution and its efforts in making Juneteenth a nationally recognized holiday.

# RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUNETEENTH INDEPENDENCE DAY

SPEECH OF

**HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, June 18, 2007*

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 155. This resolution recognizes Juneteenth's significance in crafting a rich African American legacy. Juneteenth, also known as Freedom or Emancipation Day, is an informal observance in fourteen states in the United States. It marked the beginning of a new phase in African-American history, when emancipated slaves along with their former owners began, slowly and haltingly, to travel the long road to equality and integration.

Celebrated on June 19th, Juneteenth is the name given to emancipation day by African Americans in Texas. On that day in 1865, Union Major General Gordon Granger read General Order #3, officially proclaiming freedom for slaves in that state. Granger's ride through Galveston culminated a two-and-a-half-year trek through America's deep south to liberate the enslaved.

Juneteenth is an expression and extension of American freedom, and like the Fourth of July, is a time for all Americans to celebrate our independence, human rights, civil rights and freedom. It is an occasion where time, history and culture conspire to celebrate such a symbolic event.

The celebration of June 19th as emancipation day spread from Texas to the neigh-

boring states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. It has also appeared in Alabama, Florida, and California as African American Texans migrated to those regions. Juneteenth's commemoration did not only extend its geographic reach but it also embraced participants from all political and civic segments of the black community.

Unfortunately, my home state does not officially recognize Juneteenth but has an unofficial commemoration on May 20th in the capital, Tallahassee. Even as we acknowledge the evils of slavery and the ravages it wrought upon our society while paying tribute to those who suffered with no recompense, Juneteenth challenges us to strengthen our bonds of unity and to offer support to one another.

Even more importantly, Juneteenth does not polarize black and white Americans. Rather, it has become an annual cultural observance primarily devoted to civic affairs because it encourages us to be sensitive to others' conditions and experiences, so that we can make significant and lasting improvements in our society. Like the African Sankofa, we must acknowledge and honor our past. But we must always fervently forge to solidify a hopeful future.

Regrettably, the African American community continues to confront many challenges in mitigating and eventually eliminating institutional racism. Emancipation did not bring equality. We still live in a society plagued by prejudices and stereotypes. I find it unfathomable that such a momentous occasion is seldom acknowledged, much less celebrated. We must not let our past dictate our present. After all, we owe it to the thousands of lives that were mercilessly destroyed by an elitist society designed to subject and suppress them. Let us take the initiative to finally tend to a gashing wound that has crippled the African American community. Let us honor our ancestors and build a future noteworthy of their legacy.

Mr. Speaker, Juneteenth is a significant event that addresses the paradoxical race relations in our nation! It recognizes the impediments faced by the black community yet continues to inspire us to strive for an egalitarian society. We should set precedence on addressing past atrocities and present disparities so that we can truly embody democracy. I am honored to support this resolution.

# PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO**

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 22, 2007*

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, I was absent from the chamber late last night. Had I been present for the seven rollcall votes that were taken on amendments to H.R. 2764, the Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2008, I would have voted "no" on rollcall No. 535, "no" on rollcall No. 536, "no" on rollcall No. 537, "no" on rollcall No. 538, "no" on rollcall No. 539, "yes" on rollcall No. 540, and "no" on rollcall No. 541.